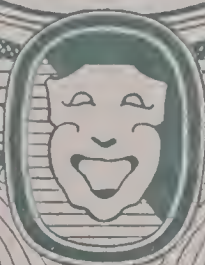


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THE CHILDREN'S BOOKSHELF

A Play for Children

BY

PATTEN BEARD



BECKLEY-CARDY COMPANY
CHICAGO

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CHARACTERS

MAGGIE	}	 <i>the children</i>
MARK		
SNOOKIE		
MOTHER		
DADDY		

TIME OF PLAYING: *About twenty minutes*

STORY OF THE PLAY

This playlet is designed expressly to impress children with the value of the right kind of reading. A group of children are presented by their parents with a bookshelf. They bring to it their books and discuss their preferences in books. The older children have outgrown some of the books that are passed on to the youngest. Approved juveniles are listed in the course of the conversation of the children. Mention of *Arabian Nights* brings up the subject of Aladdin and his lamp and the magic carpet, and the children sigh for these marvels as well as the treasures and joys they would bring. The upshot of it is that daddy dresses up and impersonates the genie of the lamp, and explains among other things that the treasures are there in the playroom, likewise the magic carpet, all through the bookshelf! The books are the treasures and imagination is the magic carpet to transport them to any place they may wish to go. The children are so impressed with the idea of treasure troves in the right kind of books and the delights conferred by reading them, that they resolve to choose their books with greatest care.

COSTUMES

DADDY in the later scenes is dressed up like a genie, with white drapery over his coat and trousers. He wears on his head a white turban.

MOTHER is in everyday house dress.

MARK, a boy, wears play clothes.

MAGGIE, a girl, is in middy dress.

SNOOKIE, the little sister, wears an apron.

THE CHILDREN'S BOOKSHELF

SCENE: *a children's playroom. To right, covering an entrance, stands a screen. With back to it, upon a table, is a small hanging bookshelf. Near it is a large arm-chair standing upon a wide rug.*

Discovered: MAGGIE, *placing the bookshelf on the table.*
MARK *is bending over a pile of books and sorting them.*
SNOOKIE *is seated in the arm-chair with a picture-book.*

MAGGIE: There now! [*Looks about.*] Where can we hang it, Mark?

MARK [*looking about the room*]: If it were only a bit taller, we needn't hang it at all.

SNOOKIE [*jumping up and down before it and clapping her hands joyfully*]: It's to be my very own bookshelf!

MAGGIE: Why, you little goosie! You have only three books or so to your name! It isn't your bookshelf at all! It belongs to Mark and me. Mother gave it to us.

SNOOKIE: But I want it, too!

MARK: Well, all right! You can put your books on my side of the shelf; but it's a very small shelf for three people!

MAGGIE: If we hang it, she'll be getting on chairs to reach it. We'll have to keep it on the table. She might fall and hurt herself.

MARK: Well, let it be for now, anyhow. It can stay on the table.

MAGGIE: It looks well there! [*Stands back, looking at the bookshelf on the table approvingly.*]

MARK: Now everybody go get books to put into it!

SNOOKIE: I don't know where mine all are! I must see.
[*Finds a picture-book in a corner and runs to put it into place.*] More! [*Hunts about.*]

MARK: Here!

MAGGIE: Here are some of mine.

[*The two come bringing books*]

MARK: What have you?

MAGGIE: All the books Aunt and Uncle gave me last Christmas.

MARK: And my birthday Scout Books. [*He arranges his books.*]

MAGGIE: The bookshelf isn't big enough.

MARK: I know it. But I'll make us each one with my carpentry tools.

MAGGIE: Oh, I can't wait! That would be just splendid!

MARK: Oh, Snookie! *More!* [*As SNOOKIE brings her books.*]

MAGGIE: Mercy!

MARK: We'll have to fix them on the table, too.

MAGGIE: I'll put the ones I like best here. Some I care less about than others.

MARK: Same here! But I like *all!* There are books you outgrow and others you like to reread. Here is Auntie's Midget Series. I liked them once. I don't now. Snookie will, though. Have you read them?

MAGGIE: I did once, when she gave 'em to me and they were new. I like other kinds of books *better*. I don't care about rereading 'em.

SNOOKIE [*caressing a second book*]: I like to read my stories over, an' over, an' over, an' over. [*She puts the third on the shelf.*] I got 'em all now! See!

MAGGIE [*looking at SNOOKIE's row*]: Fine, Snookums! Now, maybe some day Mother'll give you your very own bookshelf, when you have *more* books! [*Reads.*] *Mother*

Goose, Andersen's Fairy Tales, and Peterkin Papers—
A good beginning!

MARK: I've got it, Maggie! We can put into the bookshelf *only* the worth-while books. See! Not any others. The sort that we tire of don't go in at all. We can only put in the books that are really *good*! Books like Snookie's are standard, good books!

SNOOKIE [*pleased*]: Yes, good, good books! [*Pats the covers.*]

MAGGIE: Well, of course, we want only good books on our bookshelf, but how're we going to *tell* which *are* the good books?

MARK: Oh well, we'll find out.

MAGGIE: Or put in only nice, fresh, new books that *look* well—

MARK [*placing some on the bookshelf beside Snookie's books*]: Well, you can't decide that way. A very poor book *might* have a very fine cover, you know! I'm going to put in some that I *like* best. Look at this, and this. [*He holds up Treasure Island and The Arabian Nights.*] I've read 'em almost to pieces! And their covers never were very good!

MAGGIE: Yes, I know! I have some like that. *Little Women* and *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, and *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*, and *Sara Crew*. [*Arranges these upon her shelf.*]

SNOOKIE: The reason they come to pieces, I guess, is because they've been loved so hard.

MAGGIE [*instructing SNOOKIE*]: But you should be very careful of the books you love, of course, you know. You don't mistreat the books you love, Daddy said so! But, then, handling books a great deal wears them out. It's bound to.

MARK: I'm careful, but when I was little I wasn't—not till I realized what books *meant*. But Snookie is old enough.

SNOOKIE: I'm going to read some of your books. I'm 'most old 'nough!

MAGGIE: If you do, you'll have to take care of them and not leave them about on the floor, Snookums! Because Mother wants us to take care of the books. That's why she gave us the bookshelf.

MARK: And we're not going to put any silly books into it, because there won't be any room for them on *our* bookshelf, and we don't want them.

MAGGIE: Only the *best* ones go in!

MARK: I put *Arabian Nights* first on my shelf.

SNOOKIE: My shelf, too. I know the story about Aladdin.

MAGGIE: My! But I wish we had a wonderful lamp and a treasure.

MARK: And a magic carpet!

SNOOKIE: I'd say, "Genie, go get me lots an' lots of awfully nice, beautiful good books, with lots of beautiful, nice, good pictures, too. An' he'd bring all, all nice and new and my *very own* bookshelf, too!

MARK: Oh, I would wish that too.

MAGGIE: And I. Wouldn't it be fun!

SNOOKIE: We can play it.

Enter DADDY, right, from back of the screen

DADDY: Hello! [*Picks up a book from the couch.*] There! I've been looking everywhere for that. [*Comes to where the children are gathered around the bookshelf.*] Fixing up the bookshelf all fine, are you?

MARK: Only we wonder how we'll get all our books into it.

SNOOKIE: An' we don't know how to choose which are good, 'cept the ones we *like* best. So we wished and [*laughing*] we wished a genie'd come an' help, one like Aladdin's, to bring us only truly good, beautiful books.

DADDY [*laughing*]: I see! Shall I call you a genie?

CHILDREN: Yes! Yes! Oh, yes!

DADDY: Mark better call him. There ought to be a genie of the bookshelf, if you only know how to call him!

SNOOKIE: How? There isn't any lamp to rub!

MAGGIE: Oh look, here's something! Play this is the lamp.
[*Takes up an old publisher's catalog that lies on the floor.*]
See!

MARK [*taking the catalog*]: A book catalog! That'll do!
Now then, I stand before the bookshelf and I—I wish a wish—and I hope the genie'll come!

DADDY [*going away*]: That's it! Wish hard! [*Exit.*]

MARK: Wouldn't it be fun if it really could happen! I wonder how long Aladdin had to wait for the genie to appear. Didn't he come at once?

MAGGIE: Of course! Genies always come *at once*! Now wish hard!

SNOOKIE [*clapping her hands*]: Come, Genie! Come!

MAGGIE: Genie of the Bookshelf!

MARK: Of course it's just play.

MAGGIE: Just play.

SNOOKIE: Play fun.

Enter DADDY, draped in a white sheet that is worn like a genie's robe of flowing folds. On his head is a turban made from a Turkish towel wound about.

DADDY [*bowing low*]: Your servant! What would you?

MARK: The genie!

SNOOKIE: *Daddy!*

DADDY: I am your genie.

MARK: Hush, Snookie! He isn't Daddy. He's our genie.

MAGGIE: Genie, I want a treasure! Right away, quick! I want a treasure, the best you can find. Pearls and rubies and emeralds—

MARK: And a magic carpet, genie!

DADDY [*bowing very low, impressively*]: Children of the Bookshelf, these gifts that you desire are right here in your very own playroom!

MAGGIE: Oh, no—not really! [*Laughing.*]

DADDY [*again bowing low, impressively*]: Children, the treasure is here—and the magic carpet too!

MARK: Oh, yes, we play it, Daddy! Excuse me, I meant, genie! Just for fun—

DADDY [*solemnly*]: Your genie tells the solemn truth. The treasure is here and the magic carpet too!

MAGGIE [*putting her finger on his ring*]: Oh! That's not the kind of jewels I want in my treasure.

MARK [*putting his foot on the rug*]: And I suppose this is the carpet?

SNOOKIE: Oh! Oh!

DADDY: No! The treasure that is greater even than pearls, and emeralds, and rubies, and sapphires, and diamonds is *here*, [*impressively*] and the magic carpet that can transport you whithersoever you may wish to go, that is here too, although it is not outwardly such as Aladdin beheld!

MAGGIE [*seriously*]: Really? *Where?*

DADDY [*goes to the little bookshelf*]: Behold your treasure that is even greater than Aladdin's pearls and rubies! [*Taking from the bookshelf a volume.*] Behold the Magic Carpet of Imagination, which in a twinkling may carry you whithersoever you wish!

MARK [*looking at the genie*]: Why, it *is* so!

MAGGIE: Of course! and I never thought of it.

SNOOKIE: I want to try it!

DADDY: Let's all try it and see if it isn't true.

MARK: I say we go to Bagdad!

Enter MOTHER, right, peeping around the screen

MOTHER: I heard you all having *such* a good time. What are you doing? Playing a game? [*Laughs at DADDY.*]

SNOOKIE: Oh, Mumsie! Daddy's a genie!

MAGGIE: The genie of the bookshelf! And we've got a treasure and a magic carpet!

MARK: And he's going to help us select books for our bookshelf!

SNOOKIE: An' we're goin' to have the bestest books and the loveliest.

MAGGIE: And Mother, you're to sit right down in the chair there and help, too! And you're to write to all the aunts an' uncles and cousins and tell them we *don't* want any more silly stories, just things that are standard. And oh, we want The Book of Knowledge and Mark wants biography and science, and I want to know how to make things, to sew and cook, and stories, too, that are ever so good—that I'll want to keep forever and *ever*!

MOTHER: Yes! Yes!

MARK [*showing the catalog*]: Here, see! We'll go over this and select beforehand the books we want and then we'll work for a real library.

DADDY: The genie says he will help.

MAGGIE: Oh, the genie'll go and get them for us!

MARK: We'll be better off than Aladdin and have *two* genii to help! [*He puts his hand in his mother's and looks up at her smiling. She nods.*]

DADDY: Both genii will surely bring you books for the bookshelf! The best books will come to you on birthdays and Christmas.

MAGGIE: And don't let the uncles and aunties give us any more useless books.

DADDY: Such books only as are real treasures, rubies of thought; pearls beyond price of happiness and goodness; good and beautiful stories that are evergreen in our memory like the pure color of emeralds; sparkling happiness of hours well spent in reading—diamonds!

MOTHER: And such books as are *real* magic carpets!

DADDY: That is good—

MOTHER [*laughing*]: Splendid!

MARK: Some books, you know, I shall always like. Oh, I'm sure of it, even when I grow up like Daddy!

MAGGIE: Me too! Even when I get to be a lady like Mumsey!

MOTHER: *Arabian Nights*, for instance.

MAGGIE: Oh yes! And ever so many more good books.

MARK: That everybody wants to own.

MAGGIE: That everybody loves.

SNOOKIE: Loves almost to pieces.

DADDY: You shall have them!

MARK: Oh, genie!

MOTHER: You shall have them!

MAGGIE: Oh, isn't it lovely!

MARK: Great!

MAGGIE: A treasure, a magic carpet, and two genii!

MARK: Let's go right off now on the magic carpet! [*He sits on the rug. MAGGIE leans over the side of the chair and DADDY leans on one arm, while SNOOKIE curls at his feet.*]

DADDY: We wish to go to—

MARK: Bagdad!

MAGGIE [*taking Arabian Nights to hand him from the bookshelf*]: To Bagdad! To Bagdad!

SNOOKIE: Going to Bagdad!

DADDY [*opening the book*]: To Bagdad then! Upon the Magic Carpet of Imagination, in a twinkling it will transport us through the real magic of thought, and we shall be living far away, far, far away from here.

SNOOKIE: Hurry! Start!

MOTHER: We're all ready, genie dear!

DADDY: I think we'll have to take other trips together, too, —down Alice's rabbit hole, maybe; to Fableland with *Aesop*; through the *Child's Garden of Verses*; into the Jungle too; up to the Alps with *Heidi*; to Dreamland

with Davy and the Goblin; to Crusoe's Island. But now, now we are off to Bagdad! And here we go upon the Magic Carpet of our Bookshelf's thought! Imagination is our Magic Carpet, you know! [*He opens to the story and begins it as the curtain slowly falls.*]

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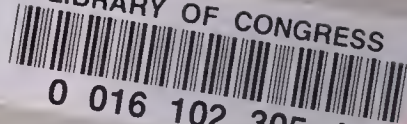
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